A Year of Action to Expand Equal Employment Opportunities and Economic Mobility
For Individuals with Disabilities: Building "Curb Cuts to the Middle Class"

The Curb Cuts to the Middle Class Initiative ("Curb Cuts Initiative") is a cross-agency effort working to increase equal employment opportunities and financial independence for individuals with disabilities, with a particular emphasis on individuals with significant disabilities.

Curb cuts in the streets help make America a more accessible and inclusive nation. The Curb Cuts to the Middle Class Initiative brings the same ingenuity and commonsense solutions to ensure that workers with disabilities, like all Americans, have the opportunity to obtain and succeed in good jobs and careers.

The new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) places significant new responsibilities on several Cabinet-level agencies that have the responsibility for increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities, particularly the Department of Labor and the Department of Education. These agencies will take the primary lead in furthering various initiatives within their departments designed to advance employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

The Curb Cuts Initiative is a value-added, cross-agency initiative designed to coordinate and leverage resources across the federal government. In its pilot year, the Curb Cuts Initiative is focusing on supporting effective implementation of the affirmative action and nondiscrimination obligations of federal contractors under the updated Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act regulations. Section 503 is designed to increase federal contractors' recruitment, employment and promotion of individuals with disabilities. Working together, these agencies will help people with disabilities prepare to qualify for the array of jobs offered by federal contractors; connect federal contractors with jobs to qualified job seekers with disabilities; and provide federal contractors with the tools and resources they need to recruit, retain and promote people with disabilities.

The Curb Cuts Initiative is also focusing on successful implementation of the President's Executive Order 13548, designed to increase the number of individuals with disabilities in the federal workforce. Executive Order 13548 called on the federal government to hire 100,000 individuals with disabilities by July 2015. Given budget cuts that affected government hiring in the past five years, federal agencies are looking beyond July 2015 to fully achieve the goals of the Executive Order.
Leading up to the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act in July 2015:

- The White House is holding a Champions of Change event on October 14, 2014 that will bring together employers, individuals with disabilities, federal officials and others to highlight successful strategies for increasing the employment of individuals with disabilities in good career-path jobs.

- The Social Security Administration has just expanded its Ticket-to-Work Call Center and will host virtual job fairs to help persons on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) learn about careers with federal contractors and federal agencies.

- The Department of Labor recently launched a new National Employer, Policy, Research and Technical Assistance Center on the Employment of People with Disabilities, which will emphasize providing best practices and technical assistance to federal contractors and federal agencies.

- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, in consultation with the Office of Personnel Management and the Department of Labor, has revised the ABC’s of Schedule A for Applicants with Disabilities in order to provide the most up-to-date information on the use of the Schedule A hiring authority by federal agencies for individuals with disabilities. The EEOC will revise the ABCs of Schedule A for other audiences over the next year.

- The Office of Personnel Management and the Social Security Administration have formalized a partnership that seeks to recruit and retain SSDI beneficiaries into careers in Federal service. This partnership includes an increase in the number of SSDI beneficiaries screened and posted on the OPM Shared List of job applicants with disabilities seeking Federal employment.

- The Department of Health and Human Services is encouraging competitive integrated employment for individuals with significant disabilities through a variety of efforts including partnering with state entities on systems change, supported employment initiatives and technical assistance. Additionally, the Affordable Care Act is improving access to greater choices in healthcare coverage, removing one important barrier to participation in the workforce for many Americans with disabilities.

- Over the next year, members of the Curb Cuts to the Middle Class Initiative will leverage existing government and private resources to develop user-friendly, interactive online tools that will connect job seekers with disabilities to federal contractors, federal agencies and other employers and will develop a tool kit that will leverage existing technical assistance resources to support federal contractors and federal agencies in their efforts to retain and promote employees with disabilities.

- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission will issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to update its regulations to enforce the federal government’s obligation to be a model employer of individuals with disabilities pursuant to Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act.
The Department of Labor will develop and conduct training on Section 503 requirements for federal contracting officers.

The Administration is also improving career path employment for individuals with significant disabilities by breaking down barriers to job-driven training and hiring for any individual who is willing and able to work. To accomplish this, the following actions are being carried out:

- Agencies across the federal government are increasing collaborations among American Job Centers, educational institutions, labor unions, vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, state agencies providing long-term services and supports, veterans’ organizations, independent living centers, and others to offer career path employment supports.

- Through the Disability Employment Initiative, the Pathways to Careers: Community Colleges for Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities Demonstration Project, and other initiatives, the Department of Labor is expanding the capacity of the American Job Centers, community colleges and others to equip youth and adults with disabilities with skills and credentials required to gain and sustain high-wage, high-skill jobs and careers.

- The Department of Education is targeting grant funds to ensure that VR counselors have the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the demands of employers and to promote employment of individuals with disabilities. In addition, this year the Department has launched a Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center to implement job-driven strategies for employer-engagement and train VR counselors.

- The Department of Transportation is providing $110 million to assist the transportation disadvantaged (including people with disabilities and those with low income) to find accessible and affordable transportation to work.

- The Department of Veterans Affairs is leveraging labor market, career information and employer relationships to connect veterans with disabilities to in-demand training and job opportunities.

For more information on these and similar initiatives, click here.

The Curb Cuts to the Middle Class Initiative includes participation by agencies across the federal government, including the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Justice, Department of Veterans Affairs, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, National Council on Disability, Office of Personnel Management, Social Security Administration, the Department of Commerce, and the Corporation for National and Community Service.